



Montana

Office of Public Instruction

Denise Juneau, State Superintendent

Office of Public Instruction
P.O. Box 202501
Helena, MT 59620-2501
406.444.3095
888.231.9393
406.444.0169 (TTY)
opi.mt.gov

HB 98

EXHIBIT 1

DATE 1/23/13

HB 98

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee,

My name is Terry Kendrick, and I am here on behalf of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to urge your support of HB 98. I also want to thank the interim committee for their work on the issue of childhood hunger and for bringing this bill forward.

Montana has high hopes and high expectations for its students. We want them to graduate from high school being ready for college or career. We want them to have the knowledge and skills needed to be successful in a rapidly changing world. We want them to grow up to be good citizens, productive members of our community, and to be the future leaders of our state and nation.

In order for them to meet and exceed our expectations, part of our responsibility must be to do our best to make sure that children start their school day ready to learn, that their growing bodies and brains receive the needed nutrition so these students can be healthy, active learners throughout their lifetime.

It is troubling to know that one in five children in Montana live in families that don't have enough food. Many of these children have to skip meals because there just isn't enough to go around. Far too many Montana families must rely on school nutrition programs so their children will not go hungry. We know that the lack of nutrition affects a child's behavior, school performance and overall cognitive development.

- For a school aged child, not eating breakfast results in fatigue and a diminished attention span. While the body adjusts to decreased blood sugar levels, the brain struggles to perform its functions without the right amount of nutrients.
- Children up to the age of ten need to eat every four to six hours to maintain a blood sugar concentration high enough to support the activity of the brain and the nervous system.

We have heard that some schools make sure every student eats breakfast at the school on test day because they know that eating breakfast improves a student's performance. Children need to do well in school every day, not just test day.

The Office of Public Instruction's school breakfast program served more than 4.5 million (4,724,809) breakfasts last year. We currently have 106 public schools in the state that do not serve breakfast. If we are able to add 40 schools over the biennium through the \$500 grants, we will have 89 percent of our schools serving breakfast. That greatly expands access to this important meal for the children of Montana.

The OPI School Nutrition Programs has offered mini-grants in the past and we have the capacity to administer and monitor the grants as outlined in the bill.

In addition, the \$150,000 to reimburse schools for the cost of reduced-priced meals means eligible children can receive the breakfast at no cost and that schools won't have to turn away students. This will help to decrease barriers to participation and increase access to the program for these students. We want all of Montana's children to start the day in a healthy way.